

## Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

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R 191520Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3983

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BANJUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1244

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MR SG

SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN-SENEGALESE RELATIONS

REF: A. DAKAR 3406 B. DAKAR 3522

1. VISITING DAKAR-BASED CANADIAN AMBASSADOR, ANDRE COURVETTE, DISCUSSED MAURITANIAN-SENEGALESE BORDER SITUATION WITH US JUNE 18. HE HAD RAISED SAME SUBJECT PREVIOUS DAY DURING MEETING WITH MAURITIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MOUKNASS. COURVETTE REPORTED MOUKNASS SAID GIRM HAD RECENTLY BEEN TOLD BY PRESIDENT SENGHOR THAT WHOLE RIVERINE BORDER PROBLEM WILL DISAPPEAR FOLLOWING CONSTRUCTION OF OMVS DAM PROJECTS. AREA IN QUESTION WILL THEN BE UNDER WATER AND NO LONGER SUBJECT TO DISPUTE. MOUKNASS GAVE COURVETTE IMPRESSION THAT GIRM WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SETTLE ISSUE IN CORDIAL MANNER. "AFTER ALL," MOUKNASS SAID, "BOTH GOVERNMENTS WOULD FALL IN TWO WEEKS IF SERIOUS DISPUTE ERUPTED ON THIS BORDER."

2. COURVETTE VOLUNTEERED HIS VIEW THAT SENEGAL IS ALSO COMMITTED TO AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OF PROBLEM. HE SAID  
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SENGHOR IS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED ABOUT ETHNIC IMPLICATIONS

OF PROBLEM, MORE SO, HE SUGGESTED THAN IS CASE WITH MAURITANIANS. HE ADDED THAT SENGHOR SEES HIMSELF AS PROTECTOR OF AFRICAN ETHNIC GROUPS (TOUCOULEUR, WOLOF, ETC.) WHO LIVE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SENEGAL RIVER. ACCORDING TO COURVETTE, SENGHOR DESIRES TO CONTRIBUTE TO ETHNIC HARMONY AMONG THESE GROUPS BY PREVENTING SERIOUS BORDER DIFFICULTIES.

3. NOUAKCHOTT DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUE RECENTLY TOLD US THAT SENGHOR WILL MOST PROBABLY ARRIVE IN NOUAKCHOTT JUNE 21 AND REMAIN OVER THE WEEKEND. IF VISIT, IN FACT, TAKES PLACE, IT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY INCLUDE DISCUSSION OF MAURITANIA-SENEGAL BORDER SITUATION.

4. OFFICIAL MAURITANIAN PRESS GAVE EXTENSIVE AND FAVORABLE COVERAGE TO SENEGAL VISIT OF MAURITANIAN INTERIOR MINISTER (REF B). NOUAKCHOTT INFORMATION PUBLISHED JOINT COMMUNIQUE SIGNED AT CONCLUSION OF VISIT. FOLLOWING HIS RETURN TO NOUAKCHOTT, INTERIOR MINISTER SAID: "I THINK THERE IS A PRICE# FOR OPTIMISM: COOPERATION BETWEEN SENEGAL AND MAURITANIA IS NECESSITATED BY THE NATURAL AND HISTORICAL LINKS BETWEEN OUR TWO PEOPLES AND THIS COMMON INTEREST IS WELL UNDERSTOOD BY BOTH COUNTRIES. WHETHER WE WANT TO OR NOT, WE ARE REQUIRED TO COOPERATE AND EVEN TO COOPERATE VERY CLOSELY."

5. COMMENT: REPORTED REMARK BY MOUKNASS, THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS WOULD FALL IN TWO WEEKS IF SERIOUS BORDER PROBLEM WENT UNRESOLVED, STRIKES US AS GILDING THE LILY. IN ANY EVENT, COMMENT APPLIES MORE TO MAURITANIA THAN TO SENEGAL. SENGHOR'S REPORTED VIEW THAT WHOLE PROBLEM WILL GO AWAY ONCE AREA IS UNDER WATER ALSO SEEMS TO MISS THE POINT. THIS CONCLUSION PUTS THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE. IT WILL BE SOME YEARS BEFORE RIVER WILL BE BACKED UP BY DAMS. PRIOR TO THAT EVENT, THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF TIME TO ARGUE ABOUT BORDER DEMARCATION AND OWNERSHIP OF ISLE DE TODD AT MOUTH OF SENEGAL RIVER. ALTHOUGH WE ACCEPT WILLINGNESS OF BOTH PARTIES TO SETTLE PROBLEM AMICABLY, ACTUAL SETTLEMENT MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT TO REACH THAN BOTH PARTIES ARE WILLING TO ADMIT PUBLICLY. WE WONDER HOW WILLING PROSPECTIVE DONOR NATIONS OR ORGANIZATIONS WILL BE TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO PROVIDE

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MAJOR AMOUNTS OF CAPITAL TO OMVS RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS SO LONG AS THIS ISSUE REMAINS UNRESOLVED.

HANDYSIDE

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## Message Attributes

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